

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 2785

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, PN

SUBJECT: PREPARATIONS FOR EXTRAORDINARY CONGRESS OF ORIT

REF: STATE 84512

SUMMARY: PANAMANIAN CTRP APPEARS LIKELY TO REMAIN UNENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT SPECIAL ORIT CONGRESS AND ABOUT ANY SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES IN ORGANIZATION. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING VARIOUS CONVERSATIONS OVER SEVERAL WEEKS, SECRETARY GENERAL DEAN BUTCHER OF PANAMA'S ORIT-AFFILIATED CTRP HAS MADE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS ON SUBJECTS DISCUSSED REFTEL. WHILE HIS VIEWS ARE PERSONAL AND NOT OFFICIAL AT THIS STAGE, THERE IS CONSIDERABLE LIKELIHOOD THAT THEY WILL BE ENDORSED BY CTRP EXECUTIVE BOARD AND BE REFLECTED IN POSITION OF CTRP DELEGATION AT ORIT EXTRAORDINARY CONGRESS, IF AND WHEN HELD.

2. IN GENERAL TERMS, BUTCHER IS UNENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT GOING TO BOTHER AND EXPENSE OF AN EXTRAORDINARY CONGRESS IN THE FIRST PLACE. CTRP CONSIDERS ORIT GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE AS IT NOW STANDS. FURTHER BUTCHER HAS PROBLEM VISUALIZING ANY MAJOR CHANGES WHICH WOULD BE PRACTICALLY ACHIEVABLE AND WOULD ALSO PRESERVE ORIT ACCEPTABILITY TO AMERICANLABOR MOVEMENT, AND HE CONSIDERS LINK BETWEEN AFL-CIO AND LATIN LABOR MOVEMENTS ONE OF CONFIDENTIAL

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ORIT'S MOST SIGNIFICANT BENEFITS. CTRP WOULD PROBABLY HAVE NO PROBLEMS WITH ESSENTIALLY COSMETIC CHANGES IN ORIT, BUT SEES SUCH CHANGES AS UNESSENTIAL AND CONSIDERS THAT THEY COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED FAR

MORE EASILY AT NEXT REGULAR SESSION OF CONGRESS. IF EXTRAORDINARY SESSION IS HELD, CTRP IS LIKELY TO BE INFLUENCED ON MOST SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES BY POSITION TAKEN BY US LABOR MOVEMENT REPRESENTATIVES.

3. BUTHCER WAS AWARE OF INCREASED ARGENTINE INTEREST IN SOME FORM OF ASSOCIATION WITH ORIT OR A SUCCESSOR ORGANIZATION BUT FELT THAT ARGENTINA WAS OVERSTEPPING BOUNDS OF PROPRIETY BY, IN EFFECT, DEMANDING SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES IN AN ORGANIZATION OF WHICH IT IS NOT YET EVEN A MEMBER. CTRP WOULD WELCOME ARGENTINE CGT AS ORIT AFFILIATE, BUT BUTCHER FELT THAT ITS PROPER COURSE WOULD BE FIRST TO AFFILIATE WITH ORGANIZATION AND THEN, IF CGT WISHED, SEEK CHANGES IN IT FROM INSIDE.

4. BUTCHER WAS ALSO FAMILIAR WITH, AND HIGHLY UNENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT, PROPOSALS FOR ORIT DECENTRALIZATION. FIRST, HE SERIOUSLY QUESTIONED WHO WOULD PAY FOR SEPARATE REGIONAL OFFICES; HE DOUBTED THAT AFL-CIO WOULD WISH TO DO SO IN THE ABSENCE OF A VERY CLEAR INDICATION THAT ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY WOULD THEREBY BE INCREASED, AND HE SAW NO SUCH INDICATION. PAYMENT BY A PARTICULAR HOST COUNTRY (E.G., VENEZUELA) FOR A REGIONAL OFFICE LOCATED IN THAT COUNTRY WOULD RUN RISK OF UNDUE INFLUENCE BY HOST COUNTRY. SECOND, BUTCHER FELT THAT CTRP AND MOST OTHER CENTRAL AMERICAN LABOR ORGANIZATIONS WOULD RESIST INCORPORATION IN A REGION WITH OFFICE LOCATED IN VENEZUELA, AS THIS WOULD CARRY OVERTONES OF HEGEMONY WHICH SMALLER AFFILIATES WOULD FIND DIFFICULT TO SWALLOW--IF ORIT WERE DECENTRALIZED, BUTCHER FELT THAT OFFICES SHOULD BE IN SMALLER COUNTRIES, E.G., FOR CENTRAL AMERICAN, CARIBBEAN AND ANDEAN COUNTRIES IN SAN JOSE OR EVEN PANAMA RATHER THAN CARACAS. AS A FORMER PANAMANIAN AMBASSADOR TO JAMAICA WITH CLOSE TIES TO CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES, BUTCHER FELT ALMOST CERTAIN THAT LABOR MOVEMENTS IN ANGLOPHONE COUNTRIES WOULD ALSO RESIST BEING PLACED IN SUCH A REGION. AND, SPEAKING AS AN CONFIDENTIAL

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OUTSIDER, HE DOUBTED THAT COUNTRIES FURTHER WOUTH WOULD WELCOME A REGIONAL OFFICE LOCATED IN A COUNTRY WHICH IS NOT YET EVEN AN ORIT MEMBER. FINALLY, BUTCHER FELT THAT REGIONALIZATION WOULD PRODUCE UNDESIRABLE DUPLICATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA WITH EXISTING CTCA, WHICH CTRP WOULD JUST AS SOON SEE REMAIN AS IT NOW IS.

5. REGARDING ORIT RELATIONSHIP WITH ICFTU, BUTCHER FELT THIS SHOULD BE PRESERVED BUT THAT ORIT STATUS SHOULD BE ONE OF AFFILIATION WITH, RATHER THAN EXISTENCE AS A COMPONENT OR SUBORDINATE OF, ICFTU, LIKE MOST LATIN TRADE UNION LEADERS, BUTCHER AND CTRP CONSIDER ORIT OR SOMETHING SIMILAR AS APPROPRIATE FORUM FOR HEMISPHERIC

LABOR MATTERS AND DO NOT APPRECIATE WHAT THEY REGARD
AS ATTEMPT BY EUROPEAN UNIONISTS IN ICFTU TO MEDDLE IN
HEMISPHERE'S OWN BUSINESS.

6. FINALLY, BUTCHER REMARKED THAT HE HAD HEARD THAT
MEXICO, AND PERHAPS OTHERS, HAD INDICATED TOETCHEVERRY
THAT IN VIEW OF EXPENSE AND LACK OF CONSENSUS ON EXACTLY
WHAT AN EXTRAORDINARY CONGRESS SHOULD ACHIEVE, IT
MIGHT BE WELL TO DROP IDEA OF SUCH CONGRESS ALTOGETHER
AN CONSIDER FUTURE OF ORGANIZATION AT NEXT REGULAR
CONGRESS. BUTCHER'S UNDERSTANDING WAS THAT THIS IDEA
MIGHT BE CONSIDERED BY MAY WORKING COMMITTEE MEETING IN
MEXICO. FOR THIS REASON, CTRP HAS DONE NO FIRM FORWARD
PLANNING ABOUT EXTRAORDINARY CONGRESS, AND PROBABLY WILL
DO NONE UNTIL FUTURE OF WHETHER THERE WILL BE SUCH A
CONGRESS IS CLARIFIED.

JORDEN

CONFIDENTIAL

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